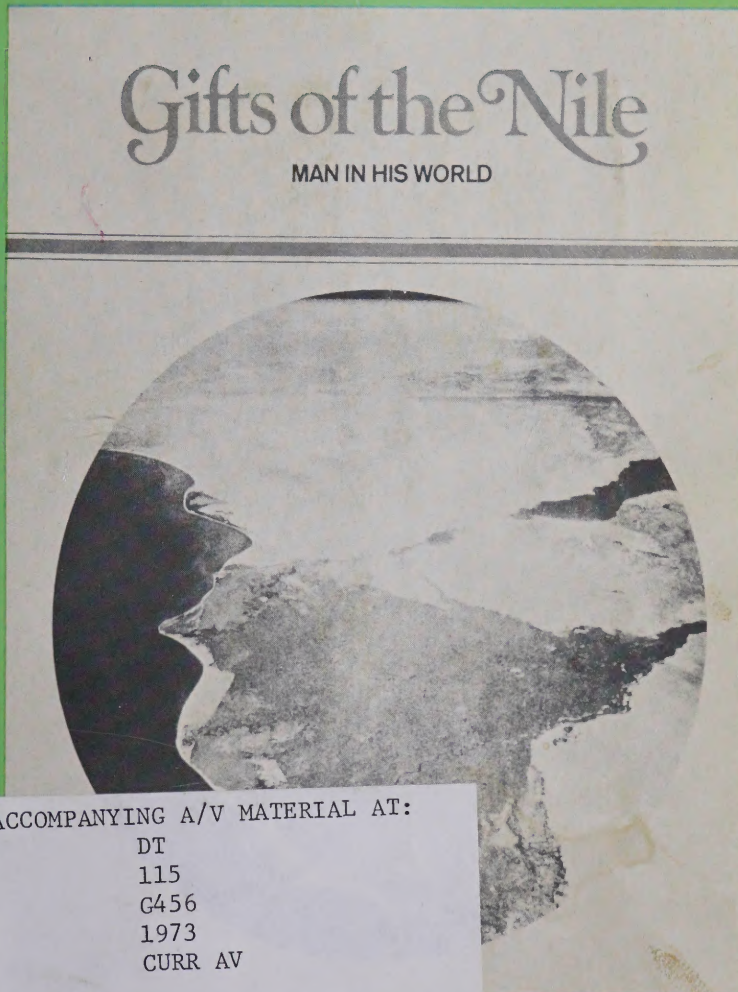




# Teachers' Guide

## GIFTS OF THE NILE



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# Teachers' Guide

## GIFTS OF THE NILE

douglas m. gray



Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited

### OBJECTIVES

1. This book encourages the student to examine fragments of evidence from which he can establish hypotheses.
2. It encourages the student to seek out and examine all available evidence in order to test hypotheses.
3. It attempts to make the student aware that an initial hypothesis is not inalterable and that revision or rejection must happen if the nature of the evidence warrants such action.
4. It tries to develop a distinction between hypothesis, what can be regarded as fact, and what can be regarded as generalization.

### COMMENTARY ON INTELLECTUAL OBJECTIVES

It is important that the teacher be aware of the level of cognition that is operative in the class at any given time. It is quite unnecessary that the student stumble over such technical terms as "hypothesis", as long as he understands the condition of the hypothesis. The essential skill (as far as the student is concerned) is to recognize the relative state of the cognitive process within the context of a discussion or argument.

Constructing a hypothesis is a natural beginning point. Hypothesizing is a very simple form of synthesis, where the student pieces together some initial fragments of evidence and arrives at a hunch

as to what it means. Students must learn to identify such kinds of statement as tentative and in need of substantiation. To clothe a hypothesis in respectability requires that its advocates produce firm evidence to support it. By firm evidence we mean those facts and ideas that have already been tested and found acceptable to the class. If the evidence is sufficient or if the hypothesis is adjusted to be consistent with the evidence at hand, we can say that the issue has reached a level of general acceptance. At this point, our hypothesis has no longer the condition of a hypothesis and is correctly referred to as a generalization.

It is important to note that this cognitive process is never fixed. What at one point was hypothesis is now by due process generalization, and what has become generalization has now a level of acceptance that establishes it as fact or firm evidence. Even these accepted statements are subject to re-processing if, later, in the light of new evidence, their correctness becomes suspect. Clearly, this whole spectrum of thought interaction is the essential dynamic of any discipline such as history. It is the heart of the Inquiry Process.

One further comment on thought process deserves our attention. This concerns concepts. We define a concept as a convention used to classify our thought processes in order to confine them

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within a manageable focus. A concept is something like a frame through which we channel our investigation or discussion. It is not, in itself, an argument but a means of conducting an argument. For instance, if we examine a painting, for an effective discussion of its merits we must apply conceptual conventions used by artists. Examples of such concepts would be line, mass, design, perspective, proportion, and colour. It is along such focal planes that we can formulate hypotheses and secure effective supportive evidence.

## HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS

*Gifts of the Nile* attempts to direct the student's attention to certain fundamentals of the historical process. A lack of discipline in these fundamentals invariably results in unsound historical study. The following paragraphs comment on several of these basic features.

### 1. MAN IN TIME

All the social sciences are committed to the study of man, and each sets forth its own particular area of inquiry. For example, economics relates to man's struggle with scarcity; political science examines his exercise of power; anthropology seeks out his primate origins; sociology surveys his communal behavioural patterns; and demography interprets his changing patterns of birth and death. For history, the fundamental dimension is time. Whenever we study the past ages of man, his past struggles to improve, his past moments of greatness, tragedy, and folly, we study history. The principal advantage to studies of man in time is the opportunity to examine an event before, during, and after its occurrence. Such a study does not deny the other social sciences an opportunity to contribute. The historian, in fact, will be the better for it if he calls upon his social science cousins to assist in unravelling the complexities of historical man.

### 2. PERSPECTIVE

Perspective can be defined as the angle from which an historical event is observed. Recognition of the particular perspective of a document or person often avoids an unnecessary muddle. Perspective is not simply that of a twentieth century eye gazing back through time on an ancient

culture. There are many perspectives, depending upon the viewer's position in time and space. For instance, a logical perspective for a class is one that arises from its previous studies. In the case of *Gifts of the Nile*, it would seem most useful for our twentieth century class to apply its knowledge of nomadic cultures as a prior studies perspective from which to measure an emerging Egyptian culture. Needless to say, we cannot escape a twentieth century perspective. In this sense, history is not past but present. The reader invariably seeks to identify with the values and concepts of past experience in order to apply them to himself and to his own society.

### 3. CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Continuity and change are vital processes in the proper experience of history. They are quite indivisible, yet each must be recognized in its own right. The constant interaction of these two forces will, in the course of time, make the student aware that much of man's success in his emergence as the premier earth animal is his ability to assimilate new situations within his known experiences and to accommodate his own experiences to new realities. What progress man has made has come through these kinds of adaptation. Man, the activist, is forever tempted to toss out old ideas and to clutch at what appear to be new ones.

Continuity and change act as the twin balance wheels of the history machine. The teacher of history, in his efforts to find a model that will function in his classroom, resorts to stripped-down versions that are forever getting out of balance and are consequently in a constant state of malfunction. At one extreme we have a "cover-law" model wherein all events of a particular genre are applied to the regimen of a pre-arranged formula. At the other extreme we have the "sausage machine" from which each event (chapter) is turned out with no thought of continuity. This operation would have some redeeming value only if the sausage components had unique features. They rarely do. Yet man's whole existence pivots on his ability to accumulate a continuum of his past experiences, and at the same time to adapt these to his changing experiences both past and present. At all costs, history must be instructive in revealing man's efforts to conform, to adapt, and to change.



#### 4. CONCEPTS

An understanding of concepts was developed in an earlier section. We suggested then that concept thinking is a necessary part of effective intellectualization. This is the basic function of a concept. But in the performance of this function, in an historical context, an important corollary is discovered. Historical concepts are the key to what might be called meaningful historical studies for the student. This whole section on HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS demonstrates a series of conceptual frames through which we have attempted to view a small part of the historical process. After all, we could not simply pontificate, "History is good for people". Such a statement would be a denial of the respectability we are demanding of our students and their thought processes. The kind of concepts we have been using are strictly historiographic, that is, they are basic channels of thought characteristic of any historical study.

Within such broad guidelines are many kinds of concepts that we apply selectively to the material or content of the study. For instance, within a study of ancient Egypt we will order our thoughts within such frames as technology, environment, productivity, sovereignty, morality and class structure. Concepts of this sort transcend both time and space. When we examine how the Egyptian sought solutions to such timeless issues, our awareness of the problem is heightened, as we ourselves wrestle with it within our own society or within ourselves. The degree to which a student finds for himself these links of identity with the past is the degree to which he finds relevance in history.

#### 5. NARRATIVE

One of the most underrated dimensions of history is the narrative. The story-line, if it is to serve a purpose beyond the mere telling of a tale, must open doors to inquiry, stimulate emotional response, and develop in the student a sense of involvement and identity.

*Gifts of the Nile* is built on a narrative frame and the characters in the story are types that a student will recognize. We suspect that most will identify with Alison Ward, for her attitude to history is the attitude of a great many students. Mustafa at first will be looked upon as a bit "straight" and, of course, the generation gap

between daughter and dad is readily apparent. The PERSPECTIVE of this book is reached through the eyes of a ten-year old Canadian girl. As the story progresses, Alison becomes increasingly absorbed in the study of the past, learns to suspend twentieth century judgments and changes her attitudes as she sees the value of what she is doing. Hopefully our students will change as Alison changes.

#### 6. CHRONOLOGY

This particular concept deals with the ordering of events in time and is logically associated with history. It is useful, but any undue emphasis on chronology invites long lists of dates and events that are both trivial and antiquarian. *Gifts of the Nile* does not concern itself with this kind of chronology. The chronology of this book is, in effect, that of the archaeologists in the story, for it follows the order of events as they are uncovered in their investigations. The archaeologists begin with certain questions which they seek to answer. The Amarna evidence (Empire Age) is at hand and useful to the answering of these questions. As they proceed in their investigation, the archaeologists go further afield, seeking additional evidence to answer their original questions and new ones. In this quest they examine evidence both that is earlier in time and later in time, relative to Amarna. If the book followed conventional chronology, the actual process of inquiry would be destroyed. As it exists, *Gifts of the Nile* creates a real sense of investigation and learning.

### OUTLINE OF GIFTS OF THE NILE

#### I THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT (Pages 3 - 7)

"The Birthday Present" offers the student a non-historical exercise in thought process. The problem begins on page 4. Any initial suggestion (hypothesis) that we fly in a direct line from Montreal to Cairo is quickly altered on receipt of the travel agent's data. Such data is an example of evidence. The new data makes several options available, so that whichever route a student chooses (his hypothesis), he must be ready to produce sound reasons for his selection. Questions

such as the four listed below may lead him to the kinds of evidence he needs:

1. In terms of price, what is the best route?
2. In terms of mileage, what is the most direct route? Should we simply draw a straight line on our map, or should we consult a globe?
3. Is the directness of the route as important as the amount of time the trip takes?
4. Is there any evidence in the story (page 5) that might indicate the route Alison actually followed?

Note: She must fly over miles and miles of desert before Cairo.

In effect, the student has just engaged in a considerable range of thought process:

- (a) initial hypothesis
- (b) rejection of the hypothesis in the face of contradictory evidence
- (c) construction of several new hypotheses
- (d) acceptance of one hypothesis as the most valid in the light of all available evidence (generalization)
- (e) the latter evidence is channelled along conceptual lines of Time, Space, and Economy.

The process is unobtrusive in the classroom work. It is the *teacher* who must be aware of the steps in the process. In time, this kind of disciplined thought will become an unconscious part of the student's "historical mindedness".

## II CRADLES OF CIVILIZATION (Pages 8 - 17)

The first historical exercise begins on page 8 and the interaction of hypothesis, evidence, and generalization is sustained to page 17. As we suggested in the introduction, the thought process can be initiated at any point in the cognitive spectrum. In this case, it begins with a generalization. On page 9, Alison challenges the validity of the page 10 map. This "Cradles of Civilization" map is a commonly accepted construction and is in effect a kind of graphic generalization. Alison is protesting that she has never had an opportunity to process the data which led to the generalization. Her insistence that we "prove" the map's validity is a legitimate request. To make any intelligent study of the map, however, we must first make sure that it is understandable. In order to guide both teacher and student, *Gifts of the Nile* provides a series of optional questions.

Essentially, the questions on pages 10 - 11 check the student's ability to read the map.

*Question 1* identifies a CONCEPT presented on the map and requires the student to review his understanding of the concept. It is assumed that a study of nomadic cultures would have preceded any study of civilizations.

*Question 2* requires the student to recognize that the coloured sections on the map are *not* nomadic. By a simple deductive process, he can present a hypothesis about the way of life that would characterize these selected regions. He may tend to express himself in negatives, for example: the way of life is *not* one of wandering, is *not* one of hunting, or is *not* one of tenting. The hypothesis *must*, however, be expressed in positives, for example: the gathering of food must be from cultivated fields, or the way of life must be settled. Furthermore, since these special areas are the focus of the map, it is reasonable to associate the new way of life (still hypothetical) with civilization.

*Questions 3-5* pursue the meaning of the word civilization. This simple investigation may reinforce the new way of life hypothesis. These questions also prepare students for an understanding of the time dimension.

*Question 7* requires the student to support the hypothesis that one of the cradles is a very doubtful candidate for an emerging civilization. He should do this by correlating the various kinds of evidence presented on pages 10 and 11.

Now that Alison has learned to *read* the map, we can turn our attention to her question of validity, attempting to provide her with firm evidence. Unfortunately, we cannot go to the actual location (as she was able to do later). We must ask the students to accept the evidence presented in the book as reliable. This problem is actually built into the story-line, for the selection of evidence is associated with Dr. Ward and Dr. El Amar. Since it is reasonable to expect that both Alison and Mustafa have pride and confidence in their fathers, their selection of evidence is beyond reproach. A valuable hypothesis emerges: Evidence is only as reliable as the person who selects it.

One other observation: the "proof" Alison seeks cannot be found. There are no absolute proofs. We can only use available evidence to form generalizations. A generalization allows us to make broad cover statements such as, "What we see in Amarna we can reasonably expect to find in all towns of Egypt," or "The kinds of evidence we have relating to an Egyptian civilization we can



reasonably expect to find in the three other cradle areas." These generalizations will be acceptable until such time as firm evidence demonstrates their fallacy.

In this light, let us examine the evidence. It would be useful to have diagrams 1 – 6 spread out on a table just as Alison found them. The basic concept in the selection of the evidence is one of **PERSPECTIVE**. It was mentioned in the introductory sections that perspective can operate both in time and in space. Here we see a spatial perspective, since we keep stepping back to get a wider angle of vision. In effect, we keep refocussing our evidence through a series of enlargements.

*Question 1* on page 13 requires careful identification of the data on Diagram 1. It also requires measurement of findings from a nomadic reference point (**PERSPECTIVE, CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**).

*Question 2* shifts the perspective to a twentieth century focus.

*Question 3* requires that measurement be made in terms of the times (**PERSPECTIVE**). The footage scale on Diagram 1 can be useful in advancing the concept of size.

Undoubtedly, Diagrams 1 and 2, when examined in terms of the three **TIME PERSPECTIVES** (nomadic, contemporary and present), raise all kinds of interesting hypotheses.

A graphic form of synthesis, at the level of hypothesis, would be a reconstruction of the actual home in Diagram 1. The Diagram 1 house has, in fact, been reconstructed by archaeologists, and pictures of the model house can be found.

The differences between the student reconstruction and that of the experts can stimulate interesting inquiry.

*Questions 1 and 2* on page 14 are closely related. The second statement in question 2 requires a measurement based on previous studies (nomadic).

*Questions 3 and 4* prompt the student to consider the value of redefining the same evidence in increasingly wider contexts.

Page 17 concludes the cycle of investigation. We have examined a map, tested it in terms of available evidence and validated its generalizations. In the process of doing this, we have entered into a new way of life, distinct from our studies of nomadic cultures (*Nomadic Journey, Eskimo Journey through Time, Grassland Safari*.) This way of life is more readily identified with our own.

### III. THE REASON WHY (Pages 18 - 27)

To this point we have covered the least difficult of the historian's tasks. We have processed a sufficient body of information to affirm the generalization that a major civilization did indeed emerge at a very early date along the banks of the Nile River. This is expressed by Alison on page 17 when she observes, "I'm very sure now that what the map shows as a Cradle of Civilization is very old and must have been very great." But then Alison adds a remark that concerned us when we first examined the map: "It's hard to believe that the hot, dry land I saw when I flew into Cairo could produce enough food for so many people in so many towns. How is it done?"

What Alison is asking is what every historian must ask. How is it possible? Why would it happen here? The effort to unravel the "how and why" is the heart of the historian's investigation. It can become a very complex matter for we are leaving the simpler thought levels of identification and interpretation and are seeking to grasp levels of explanation and analysis. This process can be very stimulating, for it is somewhat like solving a puzzle. Whether or not Alison reacted to this mystery-stimulus or whether she ran out the door in response to the stimulus of a boat cruise we cannot be sure. In any case, this is where the Reason Why begins. The geography studies from page 18 to page 27 involve the student in developing a basic environmental explanation.

### IV. THE EGYPTIANS LEARN TO FARM (Page 28)

It is a condition of studies in history that efforts to unravel and understand historical man lead to all sorts of unanswered questions. We apparently can never completely comprehend him and by inference can never completely comprehend ourselves. But if the study of history leads us simply to this kind of generalization, has it not done us a considerable service? The kind of dogmatic thinking we learn to avoid is suggested on page 28, when Alison, apparently with some finality, declares she has "figured it all out." Her smugness causes Mustafa to react. "First you won't believe anything and now you think you've learned all there is to know." Dr. Ward inevitably explains to his daughter that there are no simple answers.



## V. IN SEARCH OF A PAINTING (Pages 29 – 34)

Just how complex these explanations can be a subject for speculation, but the historian cannot proceed very far on this basis without firm evidence. To this end, we head across the river for the tomb paintings on pages 32-33. Without an examination of these, our explanations would remain strictly hypothetical. The narrative emphasizes this aspect of the inquiry process on page 31. The questions on page 34 guide the student in the examination of the new evidence.

*Question 2* is an exercise in proper generalization which cannot be effectively defended without prior study of *Question 1*.

*Question 3* suggests a series of sequential relationships that follow a clearly defined line of progression. Where to start and how to proceed are exercises in determining the degree to which the student understands the painting.

*Question 5* suggests we measure the system of productivity of the Egyptian farmer against that of his nomadic counterpart (Perspective).

With *Question 7* the students stop and reflect on the relationship of tools and man.

*Question 8*. The time perspective provided in this question gives us pause for reflection.

*Question 9* attempts to bring out the idea that the food producing tools were sufficiently advanced to provide man with a surplus of food so that others could specialize in other trades, as evidenced by the non-agricultural type of tools.

*Question 10* suggests that the tool-age civilization creates problems as well as benefits.

*Question 11* is similar, with greater emphasis on the value to society and suggests that some of the values of a nomadic culture are submerged in the "civilizing" culture.

## VI. THE GIFTS OF THE NILE (Pages 36 – 49)

"The Gifts of the Nile" section reinforces the argument that the explanations relating to the development of a civilization are not simplistic. It synthesizes the two explanations that have been advanced, (the benefits provided by the river in relation to productivity, and the skill of man in adapting to these benefits). This relationship of man to his environment (in this case, the Nile River) is extended through a series of activities, each of which adds a vital facet to the emerging civilization. Every activity must be examined with

this in mind. For instance, the mathematical inventions (pages 46-49) provide an excellent example of adaptation to a peculiar environmental condition. Certainly without the development of this mathematical "know-how" progress would have been greatly hindered.

## VII. THE GREAT PYRAMID (Pages 50 – 67)

The sections dealing with the pyramid provide the student with firm evidence with which to test many of the ideas that have been identified with the emerging civilization. In the example noted in the previous paragraph, the ideas in mathematics were presented in the form of hypothetical models. The Great Pyramid provides us with a means of historical application and verification. Pages 50 and 51 identify the object and supply a variety of reference material. There is no need to memorize it. Pages 54-59 focus the student's attention on the problems of construction. Many of the skills previously identified are essential to constructing the pyramid. Even the production of surplus food is important, allowing so many labourers to leave the fields and join the work. This labour problem can also be described in relation to the seasonal nature of the river. The Great Pyramid is an historical synthesis of everything that has gone before.

To study the Great Pyramid is to study the level of civilization reached in Egypt at that time.

*Questions 7 to 11* on page 67 are designed to demonstrate this essential emphasis. The previous questions (1 to 6) deal with the excellence of design as demonstrated in various elements of construction. The concept of design and its relationship to function are the key frames within which we try to rationalize excellence.

*Question 11* on page 67 parallels *Question 11* on page 34.

The tools seen on page 58 provide a concrete projection of question 9 on page 34.

## VIII. THE LOST TOMB (Pages 68 – 72)

"The Lost Tomb" describes an event in 1922 that revealed a remarkable slice of ancient Egyptian civilization. This new evidence allows the student to refine and develop previous explanations, since in the royal tomb we glimpse Egyptian culture at its highest level of sophistication. Almost every aspect of our previous studies can be identified in this particular study.



## IX. ARCHITECTURE AND ART (Pages 73 — 79)

The previous section lends itself to a concentration on art forms. It is a cardinal error to over-react to the "greatness" of Egypt. Clearly this civilization had limitations in such areas as religion and philosophy. The short section on Art is a capsule demonstration of this. Art-forms articulate the level of excellence that a society has achieved. Our study of design in relation to function was, in this way, a measure of architectural excellence. In the Art section, although the questions and the drawings suggest a highly developed art-form, they do not indicate a truly creative one. In choosing the "best" art object, the student is asked to make a value judgment. He can rationalize his choice using the conceptual frames of the artist, for example, proportion, line, design, and texture, but beyond these rational conventions are indefinable elements that the great artist manages to capture. Consequently, there is no agreed order and the

earliest object is not necessarily the "worst". Artists might well choose it as the "best" for its free-flowing spontaneity. If this is true, how does it reflect on Egyptian society?

## X. CONCLUSION

This book was created with the idea of demonstrating processes of learning. If he applies these processes diligently, the student will acquire a conception of history and of culture that is profound.

*Gifts of the Nile* incorporates a wide range of exercises, materials, and visual aids. Supplementary materials, in the form of books, pictures and films, are necessary to provide the student with the resources necessary to satisfy his aroused interest. All of the materials in this book are not suited to every student. The teacher should select the particular exercises and activities that suit the needs, interests, and abilities of his individual class.

Teacher's Guide: *Gifts of The Nile*

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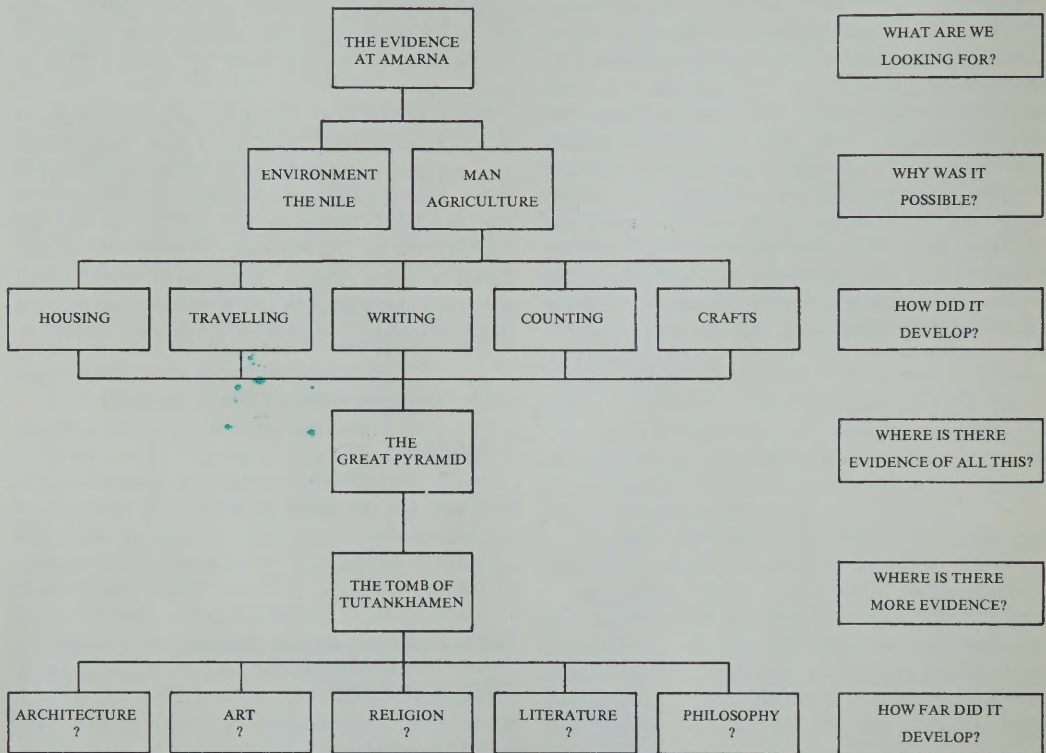
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